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STORY

OF

THE QUARRELSOME WOMEN.

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QUARRELSOME WOMEN.

During a dreadful storm of wind and rain, some of the servant's houses in the compound of a gentleman were blown down. These were the butler's house, the ayah's house, the cook's house, and the washerman's. The gentleman, who was kind to his servants, caused four comfortable houses to be built in a pleasant part of the compound. Each house had two rooms, and in the front there was a verandah. As soon as the houses were finished, they were occupied by the servants.

When the ayah got into her house, she said to the old woman who cooked for her, "This is indeed a delightful place. Now spread my mat, and I will eat my curry in the verandah."

While the ayah sat, waiting in the door of her house for her food, she called first to one neighbour, then to another, "We shall sleep well here, butler!" said she; "no disturbance here from those dirty children of the sweeper's!" Thus the ayah talked in great good humour. When she came in to dress her mistress, she went on in the same way, saying, that she should be as happy in her new house, as if she were in Paradise; and that her house was the best of the four.

"I hope it may be so," said the

lady; "I hope that you may be as happy as you expect."

The next day, when the ayah went to her food, the butler's wife came to the door of her own house, and lifting aside the corner of the purdah, she threw some dirty water upon the ayah's drinking vessel and her pawn-box.

"What have you done so for?" said the ayah in a loud angry voice.

The butler's wife peeping half her head out from behind the purdah, said, "Why did you say that your house is the best of all these four?"

"I said no such thing," said the ayah.

"Yes, you did," said the butler's wife, "and the washerman's wife knows it, and the cook's wife also.

You said it to the lady, and the sweeper woman heard you."

"Well, and if I did say so," said the ayah, "I said no more than is true. My house is the best of the four, and my lady meant that I should have the best."

Upon this, out came the washerman's wife, and the cook's wife with her child upon her side, and they all set upon the ayah, abusing her so loud that their voices might be heard all over the large compound. The ayah scolded in her turn, till she was out of breath. The old woman also left off preparing the ayah's curry, and came out to speak in behalf of her mistress.

At length the butler's wife threw an old shoe at the ayah, upon which the ayah got up and flew

at the butler's wife to beat her. The butler's wife called in the washerman's wife, and the ayah her old woman. The cook's wife set down her child, and took her part in the quarrel; and so presently all the five women were fighting together.

The gentleman and lady were sitting at tiffin. "What noise is that?" said the lady: "a noise of people screaming."

The gentleman told the butler to go and see what was the matter. When the butler came to his house, he found all the women still fighting: some had bloody noses; others had their faces torn and scratched. When the women saw the butler coming, each ran into her own house, for they knew he had been sent by the gentle-

man. The butler locked up his wife in the house, and returned to his master.

In the evening when the ayah came to her mistress, her eyes and lips were greatly swollen. She drew her head-dress over her face as well as she could; nevertheless, her mistress saw the condition in which she was.

The lady said to the ayah, "Yesterday you told me that you should be as happy in your new house as if you were in Paradise; but I fear you have found some cause of discontent."

"Ma'am," said the ayah, "with such neighbours I could not be content, if I were to be in a king's palace."

"Yes, ayah, with those evil tempers one towards another,—this

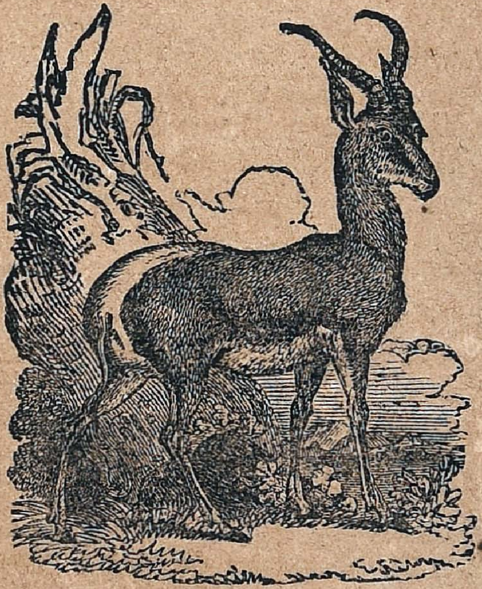
hatred, malice, and envy,—you could not be happy in heaven itself. This shews that what our Holy Book says is true, that the heart of man must be changed before he can enter heaven."

The lady told the ayah that God made man holy. The first man and woman sinned. Their children, formed after their likeness, were born full of sin. Little babies will quarrel with each other and with their mothers, even before they can speak or walk. As they get older, unless they are carefully corrected, they become every day more and more wicked.

There are two places prepared for mankind after death: the one heaven, the other hell. God cannot admit people burning with rage and malice into heaven, for

it would thus be filled with disorder and misery.

God, in his great love, gave his only Son the Lord Jesus Christ, to die in the room of sinners. Pardon is freely offered to all who seek it in His name. Let us pray to God that all our sins may be blotted out, and let us ask Him to give us new hearts, that we may be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another. Thus shall we be made meet to dwell in God's heavenly palace for ever.

Good Lord! forgive, whenever we
Forget thy will and disagree;
And grant that each of us may find
The blessedness of being kind.

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